

At the start of this 21st century, it is critical to the security of the U.S. to maintain the strongest cadre of amateur radio operators in the world. The Commission must “do no harm” to the system of amateur radio operators in the United States. The Commission must not compromise our homeland security by weakening or diluting the overall skills and proficiency of the pool of U.S. amateur radio operators.

The petition by the FISTS organization (RM-10811) provides a balanced solution to the dilemma of encouraging growth in the U.S. amateur radio operator population and maintaining the skill levels of operators for all modes of communication.

As the FISTS organization petition recommends, the Technician Class and Technician Plus Class should be merged and there should be no code requirements for the Technician Class operators. In addition, as proposed in the FISTS petition, Technician Class privileges should be extended to include digital modes within the Novice sub bands. With these provisions in place, the Technician Class license will truly represent an entry point for individuals to become amateur radio operators and experience the diversity of available communication modes.

General Class operators should demonstrate a minimal knowledge of Morse code by passing a 5 words per minute exam. The basic knowledge of Morse code ensures that all HF operators can participate in all modes of communication in a National emergency.

Extra Class operators should demonstrate the highest proficiency and knowledge for all modes of communication. A Morse code proficiency level of 12 words per minute ensures that a skilled pool of CW operators is maintained in the U.S. for homeland security.